


# ERINGER: THE ART OF THE RUSE

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Sunday, September 14, 2014

## 49. CUBAN COVERSION 3



Undercover with FBI Counterintelligence

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October 2000–January 2001

Despite Edward Lee Howard's best efforts with the Cuban DGI's Senor Deema in Havana and Edouard Prensa in Moscow, I never heard from the mysterious *Pedro*; never received written material from Juan Hernandez in Havana.

And since I'd been operating in passive move, I wasn't pushing it.

In December, my landline Caller ID tagged an incoming call *Cuban Interests*. I picked up.

"Hello, man," said Luis Fernandez. "Where are you?"

(He was calling me. Fernandez wasn't a flake. He was a fluke. Of nature.)

"I'm in Washington," I said. "The entertainment capital of the world."

(Bill Clinton was in the midst of his Monica Lewinsky debacle.)

Fernandez howled with laughter. Then he got down to business. "Can you meet me tomorrow?"

I supposed so.

Flakester looked heavier then when I'd last seen him, ages ago. In his black blazer, white shirt and navy-blue slacks, he looked like a penguin as he waddled toward me in Starbucks, Westbard Center, near his home on River Road.

The first problem with Fernandez is that he's a bore.

The second problem is that he's whiney.

But the FBI was paying again, retroactive to when they'd crunched me six months earlier, so I had to endure this Cuban.

Flakester did not immediately jump into a tirade about the United States. He'd had a communiqué from Luis Abierno in Havana. They were ready for me.

"Ready for what?" I asked. So much time had passed, I'd forgotten.

"To do your books," said Fernandez. "Abierno asks you to Havana for few days."

I told Flakester that I'd gotten busy with other projects.

Pity, said Fernandez, because he wanted me to help him whip the U.S. media into a frenzy over an anti-Castro Cuban named Luis Posada Carriles.

"Who?"

"He's a terrorist!" cried Fernandez. "We want him extradited to Cuba."



48. GET SMART



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## Labels

Cubans  
Edward Lee Howard  
Einhorn  
Snowden  
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## About Me



ROBERT ERINGER

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50. CUBAN COVERSION 4

Flakester worked himself into blathering apoplexy over Carriles's alleged connections to a) the anti-Castro Cuban conspirators in Miami, b) the CIA, and c) Iran-Contra, in that order.

Six weeks later, Fernandez wanted to see me again. He'd gained another ten pounds over Christmas and had morphed from a penguin into a walrus. I bought him a fattening latte.

"Luis Abierno asks when you come to Havana."

"Why?" I said.

"They are very interested in project you suggest."

I told Fernandez I was busy, maybe I'd send Rick K in my place.

"But we don't know Rick," Flakester whined. "We know *you*."

That is what concerned me at this juncture.



Robert Hanssen, a senior FBI counterintelligence official, had just been arrested for espionage. Nobody knew what or who he had compromised, and everyone at the Bureau was paranoid as hell.

The second-to-last place I wasn't going any time soon was Havana. (Moscow was first.) Not least because, all of the sudden the Cubans were pushing it.

"Sure you know Rick," I said. "You met him at that dinner party we had at Saigon Gourmet. He's a good writer. I'd assign him anyway, so it's better he makes the trip and evaluates the material you have

in Havana."

"Maybe I meet Rick again," said Fernandez.

Next, the Flakester's own agenda, the reason he had phoned me three times to arrange this rendezvous:

Fernandez handed me a photocopy of an invitation to a reception inaugurating the new offices in Washington, D.C. of a brand new outfit calling itself *The Free Cuba Embassy*, to take place February 6th, seven p.m.

Flakester launched himself into a spluttering fit about the audacious absurdity of such a so-called embassy.

Then he made his pitch: "We like you to attend this reception, meet some people."

"What people?"

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"Jorge Garcia," said Fernandez. "He is boss of this group."

Flakester requested that I ingratiate myself with Garcia for the purpose of infiltrating the Cuban American National Foundation.

"Identify the guys," he said. "Know the environment."

Fernandez recounted to me that on a recent flight to Washington from Miami he had found himself seated near Jorge Garcia.

"I prepared myself psychologically," said Fernandez, a solemn expression on his droll face.

Garcia had recognized Fernandez from Cuban Interests and struck up a conversation; they exchanged pleasantries while Flakester stained his shorts.

Once he had my tentative agreement to spy on the opposition for him, Flakester agreed to provide me with the names of others, beside Garcia, whom I should target.

That very afternoon, this e-mail from [lmfdez@juno.com](mailto:lmfdez@juno.com) (Luis M. Fernandez):

1. *Jorge Mas Santos (Chairman)*
2. *Denny Hays (Executive Director in Washington)*
3. *Joe Garcia (Vice-President)*
4. *Feliciano Foyo (Treasury)*
5. *Alberto Hernandez Sarduy (Staffer)*
6. *Jose Hernandez Calvo (President of CANF)*
7. *Ninosca Perez Castellon (Speak Person)*
8. *Rick Menendez (Staffer)*
9. *Abel Hernandez (New Jersey Directive)*

Of course, the FBI went nuts.

*This Cuban intelligence officer was asking me, a U.S. citizen, to help him spy on other U.S. citizens on U.S. soil, a request most incompatible with his status as a diplomat.*

If the Bureau had not been so intent on assessing Flakester for possible recruitment, they would have PNG'd his butt back to Cuba, as in *persona non grata*.

On some Bureau-crat level, someone decreed that I should attend the Free Cuba Embassy's reception.

I did not.

I explained my reasons when Special Agent Mike S telephoned late in the evening to see how I'd made out.

"I didn't," I said. "As far as I can tell, we have no plan, no objectives. What you've got is just an approval for me to waltz in there and start spying on Americans, ostensibly for Cuban Intelligence. Then I've got to figure out what to tell Fernandez about the people I met and what we talked about. If I make it up, we run the risk of pissing him off if he catches me out. If I tell him who I met and what they said, it ends up in a Havana newspaper to expose these Free Cuba folks, and we piss off the good guys. If we had an end-goal, I'd do it. Otherwise, we're just pissing in the wind."

My old friend, the late Walt Perry, had been an ace investigator for the Internal Revenue Service and chief architect of The Sting, or *illusions*, as he liked to call his operations.

Walt always told me: *Define your mission, establish objectives, determine timescale, decide budget, do it, win. And always have an exit strategy.*

Somewhere along the line, the FBI had quagmired into a bureaucracy that stifled a balladromic approach toward operational planning.

Posted by **ROBERT ERINGER** at 7:58 AM

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